AmigaMCCC News
Fort Worth Dallas
July 2004

Double-Edged Swords

It's amazing to consider how almost everything in the Amiga market is a double-edged sword, being both a strength and weakness in one.

One of the first of these two-edged blades is the Amiga's original claim to fame, its custom set of graphic co-processors. The custom OCS, ECS, and AGA chipsets made the Amiga well ahead of its time, and even today there are a few things it does that can't quite be duplicated elsewhere—a product of the world of early 'eighties home computers and game machines, where custom-made hardware was common. In the rapidly growing world of mass-produced windows PCs, custom hardware and an operating system's dependence on it became a liability, as the cookie-cutter PCs became cheaper and more powerful by comparison. There is an irony, that the PCs which started with video hardware which was little more than a conduit between the Cpu and the screen, gained more and more powerful customized hardware as the gaming world started driving development. It has come full circle, as the PC video cards which tired to surpass the power of the Amiga chipset have found their way into the Amiga One and Pegasos computer systems.

In a wide variety of markets, competition is generally a good thing, at least where Microsoft is not involved. After Commodore, and later Escom dropped out of the picture, The Amiga slowly limped its way into the world of the PowerPC CPU, as a co-processor. PhaseV pioneered the hardware, and the software to make use of it. In part to help sales of their C compiler, Haage & Partner created a new and different software method for using the new CPU. Each method had different advantages, and heated debate went between the two camps of PowerPC-users. The competition helped to improve both products, even though they were free, aside from the cost of the necessary PowerPC card. Sadly, having two competing standards in a small market hurt the market more than it helped, as both users and software developers avoided PowerPC use altogether, until they could know which was the correct one. When Haage & Partner got the developer job to put together Amiga OS 3.5 and 3.9, their WarpUp system became the default choice for PowerPC use, and the debate was settled temporarily, but not really resolved. Normally competition is a good, as the products improve to better each other, and give the end users more choice, but in this case, it split a tiny segment of the already tiny Amiga market, making a market so small it was near-impossible to enter successfully – so there was very little serious PowerPC software development for the Amiga, though what was developed showed off the potential.

The fight between PowerUp and WarpUp systems mutated into the competition between the Amiga One and the Pegasos machines, both relatively similar efforts to create a PowerPC-based Amiga-style computers, capable of running Linux as well as being reasonably compatible with the 'classic Amiga software. Both had different schedule issues, but a similar result. A small market is split into two probably inviable markets by the same competition which drives both choices to improve. Amiga One and Pegasos need to bring in new blood to their user base, by catering to the Unix markets and other areas, luring in people looking for a new experience, not to mention former Amiga users. Though choice is good, one option has a better chance at success than two in this case. We can only hope these double-edged swords don't cut too deeply, and allow the Amiga and Pegasos the means to make competition work for them and the users, instead of the opposite.

…Eric Schwartz
AmiTech-Dayton Gazette
May 2004

June 2004?

I think I owe everyone an apology. Last month was the first time that I didn't manage to produce a newsletter. I started to put things together about a week late and got so far as to scan in the preceding article. Shortly after that, my hard-drive gave out. I spent the next couple of weeks just getting my system back in operating order. In fact, I just finished getting Directory Opus running again yesterday——about a month after the crash.

…Bill Raecke

Masculine or Feminine?

A Spanish Class language instructor was explaining to her class that Spanish nouns, unlike their English counterparts, are grammatically designated as masculine or feminine. Things like "chalk" or "pencil"' she described, would have a gender association, although in English these words are neutral.

Puzzled, one student raised his hand and asked, "What gender is a computer?"

The teacher wasn't certain which it was, and so divided the class into two groups. She asked them to decide if a computer should be masculine or feminine. One group was composed of the women in the class, and the other of men. Both groups were asked to give four reasons for their recommendation.

The group of women concluded that computers should be referred to in the masculine gender because:

1. *In order to get their attention, you have to turn them on.*
2. *They have a lot of data but are still clueless.*
3. *They are supposed to help you solve your problems, but half the time, they ARE the problem.*
4. *As soon as you commit to one, you realize that, if you had waited a little longer, you could have had a better model.*

The men, on the other hand, decided that computers should definitely be referred to in the feminine gender because:

1. *No one but their creator understands their internal logic.*
2. *The native language they use to communicate with other computers is incomprehensible to everyone else.*
3. *Even your smallest mistakes are stored in long-term memory for later retrieval.*
4. *As soon as you make a commitment to one, you find yourself spending half your paycheck on accessories for it.*

AmigaMCCC News

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July Calendar

July 10 — MCCC Board of Director's Meeting
2:30 pm — University Center, Pedernales Room
W. First St. & S. West St., Arlington

July 10 — Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
3:00 pm — University Center, Pedernales Room
W. First St. & S. West St., Arlington

July 15 — Amiga North Dallas Chapter
7:30 pm — Junkins Building, SMU
Dyer and Airline Extension Rd., Dallas

July 24 — Newsletter Deadline — 7:00 am